

The Middle Class in the Middle Kingdom: Regime Support for the Chinese Leadership?

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Abstract

Over the last thirty years China has witnessed economic development at an extraordinary rate. China has also developed a growing urban middle class. However, China remains the world's largest authoritarian regime. Modernization Theory suggests the middle class drives regime change from authoritarian forms of government to more open and democratic forms of governance. Does the middle class in China display the lower levels of support for non-democratic leadership, suggested by Modernization Theory, compared to other classes? Using data both from World Values Survey and a joint Texas A&M and Peking University survey, I find the Chinese middle class does not display the unique low levels of support suggested by Modernization Theory. The data suggests the Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents" (三个代表 - *Sāngè Dàibiǎo*) has been a highly effective policy. The "Three Represents" opened the Party to businessmen and entrepreneurs, individuals previously seen as class enemies of the Chinese people while continuing to expand economic opportunity. Had Jiang Zemin not implement the "Three Represents," it is likely the Party would have alienated the growing middle class and perhaps China would have developed as Modernization Theory suggests.

Keywords: Modernization Theory, Middle Class, China, Three Represents

Introduction

Modernization Theory is one way scholars explain social and political change, especially democratization. The theory revolves around the assumption the middle class have lower levels of support for traditional leadership. As a nation's economy develops urbanization, income, and education rates increase. Inkeles (1974) suggests the raise in urbanization, income, and education creates a new urban middle class who demand a greater voice and political reform in authoritarian regimes. Thus, a growing middle class is the engine that drives democratic change.

China is an example of a place in which a new middle class has emerged rapidly as the economy has developed. China has witnessed economic development at a rate of over 9% each of the last four years alone according to the World Bank data. China has also developed a growing urban middle class. However, China has not democratized as modernization theory predicts and the government of the People's Republic of China remains the world's largest authoritarian regime. Because the urban middle class of China continues to increase year by year, yet the political transformation posited by modernization theory fails to occur, it makes an appropriate case to test the assumptions of Modernization Theory.

The assumptions of Modernization Theory are also integral to how the United States sees the world. Modernization Theory often factors into the foreign policy of the United States. Engerman *et al.* (2003) state Modernization theory was central to United States foreign policy during the Cold War. Additionally, foreign policy goals focused on contrasting U.S.-led modernization, leading to wealth and freedom, and Soviet-style development, requiring authoritarian leadership. Modernization Theory is important to study because in the post-World War II era it has been a common thread in how the United States interacts with the world. While

this theory has been in and out of favor over the years, it has enjoyed resurgence in the 21st century.

In recent years Modernization Theory has again come back to the forefront of United State foreign policy. Latham (2011) comments, “in the post-Cold War era, and especially after September 11, 2001, many of modernization’s essential elements rose dramatically from the grave.” (pg. 187) Furthermore, he argues many American policymakers misunderstand the complexities of developing nations or how to implement modernization in them, most notably Iraq. Though Modernization Theory debate began in the 1950s intellectuals and policymakers in the United States continue to debate the theory’s value. The U.S. continues to see using modernization as a way to promote positive change in the world. In the last thirty years, China has become a major component to any change in the world positive or negative.

In today’s increasingly globalized world, how governments develop and change affects how the world at large works. China has again risen to be a major player on the world stage due to impressive economic development and growth. Economic growth has swelled the ranks of the Chinese middle class. The developing urban middle class in China gives us an excellent opportunity to test a key assumption of Modernization Theory. Does the middle class in China display lower levels of support for non-democratic leadership, suggested by Modernization Theory, when compared to other classes?

Although China has been modernizing over the last 30 years and there is a growing middle class, we have not observed the popular resistance to the central leadership or even lower levels of regime support. In fact, relative support for the regime is high. Wang Zhengxu (2006) speculates one possible reason is that the CCP has done an excellent job of ‘buying’ off the leaders of the middle class. Using 2008 survey data, I find that the middle class does not display

significantly lower levels of support for the regime. The Party has adapted with the times and has folded the middle class into the Party. The lowest classes show the least amount of trust in the government, however there is still very little variation between levels of support for the Chinese Communist Party across classes in China. Under these conditions the assumptions about the middle class in Modernization Theory do not hold. Through the Chinese context this thesis helps empirically test class attitudes and economic factors important to the current Modernization Theory debate. The data suggests the developing and responsive/adaptive nature of the Chinese Communist Party.

Following this introduction I will first review the current literature on the key elements of Modernization Theory, the development strategies of the Chinese leadership, regime support in Modernization Theory, and the conceptual definitions of the key variables of trust and class. Second, I will cover my methodology, hypothesis, and operationalize the definitions of the key variables in this study. Third, I analyze the data gathered from surveys and the effect they have on trust in national level government. Lastly, I will share my thoughts on how the data suggests the Chinese Communist Party is far more varied and adaptable than many give them credit for, and should remain so if their leadership is to persist.

Review of Literature

Modernization Theory and China

Modernization Theory emerged in the decades after World War II as the United States became a world super power. The theory of modernization has continued to evolve and develop over the years and is still prevalent today. In the 1950s and 1960s, Lipset and Rostow developed the idea of economic development effecting political change. The 1970s and 1980s saw the development of a variant of Modernization Theory called Dependency Theory to explain the

global economies effect on modernization. In the 1990s, interest in the relationship between economic development, free-market economy, and democracy came back into style. In the 21st century, the debate in Modernization Theory builds on the ideas presented in the 1990s and further refines the relationship between economic development and the attitudes of mass culture. Currently the efficacy of Modernization Theory as foreign policy is in question.

Modernization Theory developed in the late 1950s and continued through the 1960s. Lipset and Rostow first developed the debate of modernization and development in nations and states. Lipset (1959), focused on Western nations and Latin America, stated economic development causes major social changes which tend to produce democracy. Rostow (1960) concurs arguing society evolves through an identifiable sequence of economic steps. Furthermore, the relationship of these economic steps and social evolutions are linear in nature. Lipset and Rostow both agree economic development causes social change. However, Lipset and Rostow only envision a single path of development that only moves in one direction. If Lipset and Rostow are correct then all nations, including China, are moving inexorably towards democracy regardless of the people's will.

In the 1970s and 1980s many intellectuals had issues with the unproblematic view of economic development. Dependency Theory arose to answer the problems some saw with the economic element in Modernization Theory. Dependency Theory holds that the globalized economy dictates the development of nation states; and thusly non-Western nations are kept in a state of underdevelopment and dependence on developed nations. Frank (1970) states Latin America was divided between those who own capital and those who did not. Additionally, the national bourgeoisie is interested in economic development only so far as its own interests are not threatened; the national bourgeoisie are bourgeois first and national second. Cardoso and

Enzo (1979) suggests that Latin American states remained a bureaucratic organization for the protection of the dominate classes tied to international capitalist interests. Dependency Theory focuses on how the global middle class affects the development of nations. Dependency Theory is an important chapter in the history of Modernization Theory, but has little bearing on this research as it focuses less on middle class and regime support within nations as I am in the Chinese case.

Late in the 20th century original elements of Modernization Theory resurfaced as intellectuals looked at the relationship between wealth and democracy. After what Samuel Huntington called, the Third Wave of Global Democratization, the theories about the relationship between economic development, free-market economy, and democracy came back into style. Rueschemeyer *et al.* (1992) state the most important variable between economic development and political outcomes is the changing balance of class forces in society. Also, though modern capitalism still has the potential to produce democracy, democracy was more likely to emerge in conditions of historic capitalism. Przeworski and Limongi (1997) down play the importance of economic development in creating democracy stating: “Only after [a democracy is] established do economic constraints play a role: chances of democratic survival are greater in richer countries.” (pg. 177) The debate of the 1990s calls into question the validity of the claim that economic development leads inexorably to democracy. The 1990s showed us that in developing nations, like China, economic factors alone do not create democracy and other factors must be taken into account.

The 21st century has brought more debate and further refinement to our understanding of the conditions necessary for social change. The current debate of Modernization Theory builds on the ideas presented in the 1990s and further refines the relationship between economic

development and political outcomes. Boix (2003) explains that modernization should diminish inequality and causes capital to become increasingly mobile making democracy less of a threat to elites. Furthermore, Boix feels this relationship between wealth and democracy accounts for the occasional democratic outcome at lower levels of income and also explains authoritarianism in oil states. Inglehart and Welzel (2005) identify mass culture and attitudinal changes as the important variables. Additionally, modernization can lead to democracy as long as the type of socio-economic development allows the shift from industrialization to post-industrialization which values of self-expression and greater individual freedom; the cultural framework for democracy. The 1990s showed us that today's conditions for modernization are different than those Western European nations who modernized in historical eras. The research of Boix, Inglehart, and Welzel collectively identify the factors important to foster democratization within the economic framework of modernization: economic development and the attitude of mass culture. Within this conceptual framework, modernization and democratization in China hinges as much on the attitudes of the Chinese citizens as economic development.

Originally, Lipset's Modernization Theory was optimistically stated that economic development would lead to democratization. Since inception, however, this optimistic picture has proven problematic and theorists have since sought to explain why. First, theorists discounted the naive optimism of a simple economic path moving in one direction. Later, theorist identified the differences between current realities and those of older modern nation states. More recently, theorists explored how mass altitudes and economic development interact to cause social change. The current reality in China is one where we need to take note of not only a growing economy, but also the attitudes of the Chinese people. By testing how class affects regime support we can

have a better understanding of those attitudes and how they in combination with economic development will lead to new political outcomes.

Chinese Leadership and Class Development

There is a relationship between the Chinese leadership, class development, the inputs of modernization and the policies of the Chinese leadership. The Maoist Era saw the beginnings of industrialization and limited urbanization. During the Deng Era economic reforms began and incomes started to rise, differentiating of lower, middle, and upper classes. The Jiang Era saw further economic reforms and the growing urban middle class became more educated while still politically limited. In the Hu Era the now established middle class continued to grow while the leadership of the Party was cemented.

Lipset (1963) suggests three main factors of modernization: urbanization, income, and education. As industrialization takes hold urbanization begins as rural residents move to cities in search of higher wage jobs. After finding higher wage jobs, urban citizens also enjoy increased income. Increased income creates discretionary income and moves the urban middle class beyond the subsistence living of the farm and is among other things spent on education. Increased education leads to the ‘modern personality’ which is interested and active in politics and pushes for more of a voice in government.

People move from the rural areas to the urban areas in search of higher paying jobs. Economic development and industrialization causes a shift from rural agriculture to urban industry. Workers move to urban centers to capitalize on external economies of scale in manufacturing and service (Henderson, 1974; Fujita and Ogawa, 1982; Helsley and Strange, 1990; Duranton and Puga, 2001; Henderson, 2003). In *Factory Girls* (2009), Leslie Chang states the following is written on bricks walls in rural villages: “Go out for migrant work, return home

to develop. Labor flows out, money flows back” (pg. 13). Chinese citizens historically were largely rural, but have been moving in droves to the urban centers in search of migrant work. Migrant work has expanded the economic opportunities of millions in China.

Higher wages lead citizens to want different things compared to rural life. Higher incomes lead to greater discretionary income, which in turn changes spending patterns. Williamson (1965) shows the strong correlation between urban population and income promotes urbanization as a path of wealth and development. Becker (2007) concurs stating the correlation has led to the perception of the positive effect of urban growth on economic growth. Life in the city is far removed from life in the countryside, causing a shift in how available income is used. Increases in income allow the new urban residence the ability to move beyond subsistence living and plan for the future. The new urbanites discretionary income is spent on, among other things, higher education for their children.

As citizens move into the middle class they will have more income which, among other things, is spent on education. Inkeles (1974) states education develops the “Modern Personality.” The “Modern Personality” should be independent and interested in public policy and aware of inequality in the society. Social change becomes the end result of more and more citizens embracing the “Modern Personality.” Modernization Theory suggests such a personality will have less support or trust in an authoritarian regime. Trust and regime support measures the likelihood of regime change. In the case of China, a lack of trust in the government by a growing middle class demographic could lead to a regime change. We expect to see the Chinese urban middle class to show less trust (regime support) in the Chinese Communist Party government than other classes because they will be educated enough understand politics and have enough money to not be dependent on the government.

Leadership policies in China have helped guide social change. As the Chinese economy has developed, the development strategies of the previous Chinese leadership have affected social development and classes. The Maoist Era focused on industrialization and eliminating the class differences of the past. The Deng Era began economic reforms causing slight differentiations in class, in turn creating the middle class. The Jiang Era saw even greater economic freedoms and opportunities while political freedom remained limited. The Hu Era saw modernization and the middle class continue to expand while reaffirming only the Party could oversee the process. Support for specific leaders has risen and fallen, however the regime as a whole has enjoyed high levels of support throughout these eras.

Modern Chinese Communist political thought began in the Post-World War II era with “Maoism” (毛泽东思想 - *Máo Zédōng Sīxiǎng*). Mao Zedong can be considered the father of modern China. He was the first major leader to hold most of the key positions in the Communist Party of China, and held considerable sway from 1945 until his death in 1976. Mao saw the Communist Party as the engine behind China’s modernization, “without the efforts of the Chinese Communist Party, without the Chinese Communists as the mainstay of the Chinese people, China can never achieve independence and liberation, or industrialization and the modernization of her agriculture.” (Mao 1945, pg. 318) Maoism arose out of a disagreement between the Communist Parties of China and the Soviet Comintern. Mao saw the agrarian peasantry (rural poor), as opposed to the urban working class, as the key revolutionary force which fundamentally transforms capitalist society towards socialism. Mao amended the Marxist-Leninist thought to fit the Chinese reality and the hope of modernization. He focused on eliminating the class differences that had divided China in the past while moving China forward

through industrialization. Modern China's march towards modernization had no middle class due to a limited urbanization and small differential in income levels.

After Mao's death, political thought shifted to integrate China into the greater global economy. Though expelled twice by Mao Zedong during the Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping became the second generation's leader and his political theory opened China into the larger world. "Deng Xiaoping Theory" (邓小平理论 - *Dèng Xiǎopíng Lǐlùn*) attempted to merge a market economic model with China's Marxist-Leninist political system by emphasizing economic construction and stability. Eventually, Deng's focus on economic construction and stability would be known as "socialism with Chinese characteristics", advocating political and economic pragmatism. In 1992's Southern Tour, marked famously by the phrase "to get rich is glorious," Deng cemented the principles of gradually expanding markets. Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms started to cause slight variations in income and separated classes creating a fledgling middle class as more money flowed into the urban centers.

As China became more open to the world, economic development also increased and with it new issues arose. The third generation's leader, Jiang Zemin, addressed the growing issues of dealing with the globalized world and continuing economic progress. Jiang Zemin's added to China's political thought with his "Three Represents" (三个代表 - *Sāngè Dàibiǎo*). Jiang Zemin first outlined the "Three Represents" in 2000 at a inspection of Maoming in Guangdong provinces:

Our Party should continue to stand at the forefront of the times and lead the people in marching toward victory. In a word, the Party must always represent the requirements of the development of China's advanced productive forces, the orientation of the development of China's advanced culture, and fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people in China (Jiang 2000).

To clarify this statement into simpler terms, the “Three Represents” are meant to represent advanced productive forces; the progressive course of China’s advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the majority. “Representing the majority” opened the party to many who may have been on the outside looking in, greatly benefiting the middle class. With the implementation of his “Three Represents,” Jiang Zemin exposed an even greater portion of Chinese society the possibility of to economic gain. In one move, Jiang Zemin caused the Chinese people to focus on economic expansion and forget about politics; ensuring continued economic prosperity while limiting the expansion of political freedoms.

In the 21st century “Harmonious Society” was implemented to address issues perhaps caused by the “Three Represents”. In 2002 Hu Jintao came into leadership of the fourth generation and proposed what he called “Harmonious Society” (和谐社会 - *Héxié Shèhuì*). “Harmonious Society” is a result of Hu Jintao’s ideology of the Scientific Development Concept which incorporates sustainable development, social welfare, humanistic society, and increased democracy. Scientific Development Concept espouses the idea the state can engineer sustainable development through tested and proven methodologies of governance. At the 18th Communist Party of China Congress on November 8, 2012 Hu Jintao stated: “Our overall approach is to promote economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological progress, and our general task is to achieve socialist modernization and the great renewal of the Chinese nation” (Hu 2012). “Harmonious Society” is Hu Jintao’s response to the growing problem of social inequality and wealth gap by focusing on social injustice. As modernization and economic development many more Chinese citizens have moved into the middle class. However, in comments made during the 30th anniversary of Deng Xiaoping policies Hu Jintao reaffirmed the strong leadership of the Party, suggesting the expansion of political freedoms would remain limited.

The Chinese middle class continues to grow as political freedoms lag behind. The development strategies of the Chinese leadership directly affected how class was formed in modern China. Mao began the industrial push toward modernization as he tore down the old class paradigms. Deng Xiaoping started economic reforms which created the new middle class as China embraced aspects of a market economy. Jiang Zemin opened up every great economic opportunity and freedom with the “Three Represents” while maintaining strict control on political freedoms. Finally, Hu Jintao continued to increase the middle class and the modernization efforts while maintain only the Party could successfully manage the process. While economic opportunity and freedom seem to expand with every generation of Chinese leadership, political freedom remains limited. Modernization Theory suggests for an educated middle class lack of political freedom will sow the seeds of discontent with an authoritarian regime.

Chinese Regime Support: Specific versus Diffuse

According to modernization theory, one of the key components of the middle class liberal values is a lack of support or trust for an authoritarian regime. Thus, support is a key measure of regime longevity. In this research trust and support are used as similar measures. Researchers, such as Mishler and Rose (2005), feel trust and support are the same, or at the least trust is a source of support. Support can be categorized two different ways: specific and diffuse. The differences in support depend on whether it is focused on individuals or institutions. Support for individual leaders and policies is classified as specific support which is unstable and can be easily gained or lost. Support for legal systems and governmental bodies is classified as diffuse support which is stable and can weather change. In China, lack of differentiation between specific and diffuse support forces research to use specific rather than diffuse trust as a measure

when dealing with national level government. Understanding the separate nature of diffuse trust helps us conceptualize regime support in China.

Support in individual people and a policy are unstable. Support for individual politicians or policies are specific in nature. Easton (1965) states specific support directly results from outputs that satisfy specific demands. Furthermore, specific support “flows from favorable attitudes and predisposition stimulated by outputs that are perceived by members to meet their demands as they arise or in anticipation.” (pg. 273) Jie Chen (2004) agrees stating specific trust is distinct because it is formed by spontaneous responses to specific policies and politicians. Since specific support is based on spontaneous attitudes about specific policies and politicians, who themselves do not have longevity, it is unstable. Support for the Chinese leadership is not based on a single politician or policy and is therefore not specific.

Diffuse support is more stable than specific support. Support for governmental bodies or a legal system is diffuse in nature. Jie Chen (2004) states, “diffuse support is shaped mainly by prolonged sociopsychological forces, such as ongoing socializations and accumulated assessments of government performance.” (pg. 55) Easton (1965) suggests diffuse support for political entities more closely represents a reservoir of good will towards said entities. Additionally, diffuse support is more stable because this good will allows individuals to tolerate political outcomes they oppose or are hurt by. The key element to the longevity of a regime is the diffuse support earned over time. However, there is a dynamic relationship between both specific and diffuse support.

Specific support, depending on duration and intensity, can affect levels of diffuse support. If ill will towards individual politicians and policies persists, it can undermine the good will the government has earned. Jie Chen (2004) outlines the relationship between specific and diffuse

trust as specific support can gradually become diffuse support. Furthermore, diffuse trust can maintain regime stability when specific support for incumbent politicians and policies is low. Conversely, significant durations of low specific support will erode earned diffuse support and threaten the stability of a regime. Due to a lack of differentiation between politicians and government by Chinese citizens, we are forced to use specific support to represent the form of support for the Chinese leadership.

It is the lack of differentiation in China between politicians and party that forces researchers to use specific rather than diffuse trust as a measure. Chinese citizens rarely make a point to separate individual politicians from the government at large. Kennedy (2009) points out, in China, researchers generally cannot ask respondents their opinion about specific leaders. Chen and Shi (2001) argue Chinese respondents do not distinguish between government and party, and government and national leaders at the highest levels of government. Furthermore, state-run media links the two political entities of party and government as one. Li (2004) echoes Chen and Shi's research on state-run media, stating state media reports use the words party and government as one term or single concept, for example 党和政府 (Dǎng hé zhèngfǔ – party and government). When talking about regime support for governments research should use diffuse trust as a measure. When talking about regime support in China there is no choice but to use diffuse trust as the measure.

Defining Class in China

Conceptually, class is hard to define but is the focus of this thesis because of its important position in Modernization Theory. The boundaries that separate society into the three major classes (lower, middle, and upper) recognized today are constantly being redefined. Objective measures of income do not necessarily equate clearly to class membership. Also, objective

measures of occupation, still seen by some researchers as a bellwether of class status, are not perfect. Subjective measures, although lacking objective rigor, of self-identification can help identify class membership as accurately as economic factors if not more accurately. Combining of objective and subjective measures will give a better chance to identifying the middle class.

Income as a measure has a wide range that can differ from country to country. Middle income does not necessarily equate to middle class status. In the United States, Chief economist of the Department of Labor Stevenson (2012) observes that income alone is a poor indicator of social class. She further illustrates her point by showing that among families with income between \$60,000 and \$75,000 about equal numbers consider themselves middle and working class. Huges and Woldekidan (1994) state middle class status should not be considered synonymous with the statistical entity of middle income. Furthermore, they give the examples of Indonesia and Thailand where middle income groups have low enough income to not generally be generally recognized as economically middle class. Chinese Hexun financial news note middle class incomes seem to range from 50,000 RMB and 500,000 RMB (Worldwide Online 2011). As nations continue to develop, citizens continue to move into the middle income bracket in each nation. In China, the possible middle income bracket is so large it is has become almost impossible to determine class membership from income alone.

Along with income, occupation is the most common objective measure class membership. Occupation as measure of class, though not a perfect measure is more reliable than income. Mills (1956) states the numbers of occupations within the middle class are large and heterogeneous, making the middle class an “occupational salad.” (pg. 291) Giddens (1973) point out Mills’ “occupational salad” leads to fuzziness around the boundaries between social classes. However, Huges and Woldekidan (1994) still believe being middle class is associated with occupation. In

China, Hexun financial news questions the validity of occupation's ability to identify middle class due to the possibility that blue collar workers may still be or become middle class themselves. The wide array of occupations found within the middle class makes the middle class vague, but more often than not still marginally identifiable by occupation. The occupations of Chinese citizens, though not perfect, can help give us a better view of class membership than income.

Subjective self-identification can help identify middle class membership. Aspiration can show who is and is not middle class. Wolf (2012) states middle class status has always been as much about attitude as it has been about economics. In February 2010, the White House Task Force on the Middle Class defined the middle class as follows:

Middle-class families are defined by their aspirations more than their income. The Commerce report assumes that middle-class families aspire to home ownership, a car, college education for their children, health and retirement security and occasional family vacations (White House Task Force on the Middle Class 2010, pg. 10).

Discretionary income is spent on, among other things, education. An increase in income and education, vis-à-vis economic development, are important components in both middle class membership and Modernization Theory. Aspirations of Chinese citizens to middle class status can give us a good idea of class membership. However, limitations in the data do not allow us to accurately measure aspiration to identify middle class status.

Variables and Definitions

In this thesis we are testing the main assumption inherent to democratic outcomes of Modernization Theory. Democratic outcomes, according to Modernization Theory, revolve around middle class identification and lack of regime support for authoritarian government

leaders. There are two main hypotheses critical to this research; one based on occupational class membership and one based on self-identification class membership. It is my hope self-identification of class addresses some of the issues of aspiration that the data does not allow us to measure. Both class memberships will be tested against regime support. Variables of age, residency, migrant status, media exposure, etc. will be controlled to accurately test the relationship between class and regime support.

This thesis research is based off two main hypotheses, objective and subjective. Occupational hypothesis: Respondents who hold white collar jobs will have less trust in the national level government. Self-Identification hypothesis: Respondents self-identified as having middle-range class status will have less trust in the national level government. I used both subjective and objective hypotheses to cover the inconsistencies relating to middle class membership. If Modernization Theory is correct, the high levels of continued economic development in China should be creating a vibrant middle class which is a key feature of Modernization Theory. Though Modernization Theory expects class to be the most important variable relative to trust, there are other variables to consider.

Social rank was chosen because self-identified social rank is one of the two main ways we can differentiate the middle class. In China, class has always been an important distinction in life. Saich (2007) noted that residents in the lowest and highest income category express the highest level of satisfaction in national level government. Furthermore, he suggests upper and lower classes clearly see the policy intent, if not effect, of the national government being supportive of their particular interests. Yingjie Guo (2012) states Marxist writers still feel the middle class is a Western concept eroding China's political system. Subjective measures of social rank are important in China because a measure of bias against certain classes in society

and subjectivity allows us insight into class membership without asking respondents to identify themselves as “middle class”. Respondents were asked how they would rank their social status on a ten point scale, 0 for the lowest social status to 10 for the highest social status.

Occupation is an accepted measure of middle class. White collar and blue collar are two major categories of class within occupation. Huges and Woldekidan (1994) still believe being middle class is still associated with occupation. The wide array of occupations found within the middle class makes middle class vague, but more often than not still marginally identifiable by occupation. While there are inconsistencies identified with occupation and class, especially in China, it remains one of the better identifiers of class. Respondents were asked the type of their current employment: white collar (managers, clerks, professionals) or blue collar (manual labor).

Control Variables

The variable of age was chosen because of the documented relation between age and regime support. In China, there is still generational memory of a China in chaos without a stable government. This produces differing levels of trust dependent on the age of the respondent. Pye (1978; 1988) states in contemporary China there is a cultural predisposition toward the acceptance of authority passed from generation to generation. Thornton (1999) finds that peasants in the post-Mao era are more likely than those in the Republican period to see local officials as “imperial envoys” and do not trust the national level government any more than local government. The People’s Republic of China is less than one hundred years old, and there are still those alive who remember life before and at the start of Chinese Communist Party regime. Respondents were asked in what year they were born, the assumption is the older the respondent the greater support of the regime will be.

Urban and rural residency was chosen as a variable because it is a major factor in developing nations. In China, the split between urban and rural is a major demographic divide. Thomas Bernstein and Xiaobo Lü's (Bernstein and Lü, 2000; Lü, 1997) findings suggest some rural people trust the system as a whole, despite a relationship with the state's local representatives is less than ideal. Li (2004) states among rural Chinese who see a difference between lower and higher levels of government, most appear to feel higher levels (national level government) are more trustworthy than lower levels of government. Until recent years the majority of Chinese citizens lived in rural areas. Respondents were asked what kind of household registration they held, either agricultural or non-agricultural. The assumption is respondents who hold urban household registration will be more supportive than respondents who hold rural household registration due to greater economic opportunities in urban centers.

Migrant status has become an increasingly important demographic relative to regime support over the last thirty years. Rural to urban shift has accelerated in step with economic development as more and more individuals move to the cities in search of employment. Li (2004) explains surveys shows the average income of respondents who engaged in economic activities other than farming (i.e. migrant workers) was higher than those who only farmed. Shukai (1999) and Solinger (1999) show villagers who venture into cities are often harassed and exploited by higher level government officials, therefore they may develop more distrust in the regime. Migrant workers continue to increase in urban areas as the Chinese economy increases in size and scope. Respondents were asked where their household registration was relative to their current residence. The assumption is the increased wages earned by migrant workers will translate into higher levels of regime support.

The effect of media exposure on regime support is well documented and is the reason it was chosen as a variable. The Chinese Communist Party has many avenues to disseminate propaganda to the Chinese people and such propaganda has a well-documented effect on regime support. Newton (2001) explains specific trust can be based upon immediate, first-hand experience of others, however political (diffuse) trust is learned at a distance, usually through media. Li (2004) states rural residents hear beautiful promises from central leaders and it should be no wonder many have a high level of regime support. However, using 1994 data Chen and Shi (2001) suggest prolonged media exposure to state-controlled media has diminished returns. Wang (2006) agrees explaining exposure to media has a negative effect on citizens' trust in the government. Media exposure in China continues to be interesting as media become global and digitized. Respondents were asked how many times a week they received political information from the government. The assumption is the greater exposure to state media the greater level of regime support.

Empirical Evidence and Analysis

Both main hypotheses were rejected by the data. The objective and subjective based hypotheses were proven incorrect when tested. Objectively, those respondents holding white collar, or middle class, jobs did not show the lowest levels of trust in national level government. Subjectively, those who self-identified as having middle class status also did not have the lowest levels of regime support. This runs counter to what we would expect to see in Modernization Theory. Those respondents who reach middle class status should be educated enough to see inequality in society and lack of opportunity and have the money and power to act. This suggests Modernization Theory does not explain developments in China. The Chinese middle class holds more in common with upper classes than lower classes.

Table 1. Over-all Trust in China over Time from 2001 to 2008

	2001	2007	2008
	% (Frequency)		
Distrust	3 (32)	7 (138)	14 (433)
Trust	97 (952)	93 (1,747)	86 (2,669)
Total	100 (984)	100 (1,885)	100 (3,112)

Source: World Values Survey [2001] [2007]
Texas A&M/Peking University [2008]

Table one shows over-all Chinese trust in the government over time. In 2001 and 2007 the World Values Survey asked survey respondents: “I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all? The government.” Answers of “a great deal of confidence” and “quite a lot of confidence” are both represented positively as trust. Answers of “not very much confidence” and “none at all” are both represented negatively as distrust. In 2008 the Texas A&M/Peking University survey asked respondents: “How much do you trust the following people? Central government officials. Do you trust them <01> very much <02> somewhat trust them <03> don’t trust them very much <04> don’t trust them at all. Answers of “very much” and “somewhat trust them” are both represented positively as trust. Answers of “don’t trust them very much” and “don’t trust them at all” are both represented negatively as distrust. From 2001 to 2007 trust drops 4% drops again from 2007 to 2008 by another 7%.

Trust remains high in China. The government in China still enjoys very low criticism as most respondents have a positive view of the central authority. The data shows trust has been falling over the last decade when. However, trust remains at high 86.1 percent of respondents responded positively when asked about trust. The data suggests that economic development has

started to create Inkle's (1974) "Modern Personality," people who are independent and interested in public policy, aware of inequality in society, and less likely to tolerate an authoritarian regime. The development of the "Modern Personality" is in line with what we'd expect to see in Modernization Theory. However, this trend in trust only suggests the middle class is developing distinctive values we expect to see but without the impact.

Table 2. Self-Identified Social Rank, Subjective Measure of Class

0 = low 10 = high	Freq.	Percent
0	167	5
1	132	4
2	227	6
3	342	9
4	335	9
5	1,307	36
6	469	13
7	329	9
8	186	5
9	63	2
10	63	2
Total	3,620	100

Source: Texas A&M/Peking University [2008]

Table 3. Trust separated by Self-Identified Social Rank

<u>Trust</u>	<u>Class</u>						
	% (freq)						
	2001			2007			
	Lower	Middle	Upper	Lower	Middle	Upper	Total
Distrust	4 (15)	3 (15)	0 (0)	9 (76)	6 (46)	0 (0)	6 (152)
Trust	96 (373)	97 (517)	100 (3)	91 (817)	94 (784)	100 (11)	94 (2,505)
Total	100 (388)	100 (532)	100 (3)	100 (893)	100 (830)	100 (11)	100 (2,657)

Source: World Values Survey [2001] [2007]

Table two shows how respondents self-identified ranking from 0, the lowest, to 10, the highest. 58% of respondents self-identify in the middle ranks of 4, 5, and 6 on the 0 to 10 scale. Table three shows Chinese trust in the national level government separated by class. Though class membership data exists for 1995, however data on trust only exists from 2001 on. In graph 4 only trust is represented, as distrust should be seen as the only other outcome between the choices of trust and distrust. Those respondents whom hold upper class status consistently over the years tested showed 100% trust in the national level government. Those respondents whom hold middle class status showed lower and falling levels of trust over time compared to upper class respondents: 97% in 2001; 94% in 2007. Those respondents whom hold lower class status showed lower and falling levels of trust over time compared to both upper and middle class respondents: 96% in 2001; 91% in 2007.

Respondents with higher self-identified social rank show greater trust. Chinese reported level of trust increased side by side with increased view of social placement. The data supports Saich's (2007) finding that those who report the highest levels of income (social rank) show the highest level of support for the national level government. However, the data also disproves Saich's (2007) statement that the lowest levels of income (social rank) also show very higher levels of support compared to those of the highest social ranks. Modernization Theory suggests that citizens at the highest and lowest levels of society will show greatest level of trust in the government due to perceived and received benefits. However, data suggests the national level government in China is not providing the lower class the social and economic benefits that create the high levels of trust lower classes are suggested to have in Modernization Theory. This suggests the lower class, not the middle class, have distinct values compared to other classes.

Table 4. White Collar Employment, Objective Measure of Middle Class

	Freq.	Percent
No	3,477	89
Yes	437	11
Total	3,914	100

Source: Texas A&M/Peking University [2008]

Table 5. Blue Collar Employment, Objective Measure of Lower Class

	Freq.	Percent
No	3,564	89
Yes	425	11
Total	3,989	100

Source: Texas A&M/Peking University [2008]

Lower class occupation has more of an impact than middle class occupation on trust. Both respondents who hold white collar and blue collar employment have a negative effect on trust, but blue collar employment is far more significant. This runs counter to the suggested impact middle class citizens with “modern personalities” should have according to Inkles (1974). However, these results do support Wang (2006) who states business and intellectual elites are folded into the establishment. The objective variable of class defined by occupation supports the subjective variable of class defined by self-identification. Again we see the lower classes having a more distinct set of values compared to the middle and upper classes. Again, this is counter to what Modernization Theory suggests should develop.

Table 6. Trust Subdivided by Three Cohorts of Age

	<u>Age</u> 1 = born before 1949; 2 = born after 1950 and before 1975; 3 = born after 1976			
	% (freq)			
<u>Trust</u>	1	2	3	Total
(No Trust) 1	2 (12)	4 (67)	4 (27)	3 (106)
2	8 (57)	10 (177)	15 (93)	11 (327)
3	33 (240)	41 (725)	45 (278)	40 (1,243)
(Trust) 4	57 (408)	45 (803)	36 (225)	46 (1,436)
Total	100 (717)	100 (1,772)	100 (623)	100 (3,112)

Pearson chi2 (6) = 68.3057

Pr = 0.000 [p<0.001]

Source: Texas A&M/Peking University [2008]

Table six shows trust in government subdivided by age. Age is subdivided into three cohorts: Pre-Liberation (born before 1949), Maoist Era (born after 1950 and before 1975), and Post Maoist Era (born after 1976). Respondents were asked: “How much do you trust the following people? Central government officials. Do you trust them <01> very much <02> somewhat trust them <03> don’t trust them very much <04> don’t trust them at all. The scale was reversed to <01> don’t trust them at all <02> don’t trust them very much <03> somewhat trust <04> very much. This change makes visualization of the data easier. Trust is highest in the oldest cohort with 90% approval in the government. Trust is second highest in the middle cohort with 86% approval in the government. Finally, trust is lowest in the youngest cohort with 81% approval in the government.

Age significantly affects levels of trust in the Chinese government. Older generations have a living memory of China without stable leadership. The data supports both Pye and Thortons assertion that older generations have higher levels of trust in the government. Pye

specifically suggests this effect is linked to traits within to Chinese culture. Younger generations tend to be more educated than older ones as China modernizes itself. Additionally, older generations understand the reality of life without strong leadership, leadership provided currently by the Chinese Communist Party. As older generations pass away the living memory of a China in chaos will also end, and perhaps lessen the affect age has on trust in the Chinese Community Party.

Table 7. Frequency of Respondents Holding Urban/Rural Household Registration

HHReg	Freq.	Percent
Urban	997	25
Rural	2,992	75
Total	3,969	100

Source: Texas A&M/Peking University [2008]

Differences in house hold registration, rural and urban, affect levels of trust in national level government. Rural and urban population is one of the most important demographic separations in China and has a significant effect on trust. The data supports Bernstein and Lü (1997; 2000) and Li's (2004) statements that rural residents tend to have higher rust in the government. Rural residents do have lower levels of trust in local government, but this research focuses only on upper levels of government. Since 2000, there has been aggressive urbanization in China and younger more educated (compared to older generations) Chinese move to urban areas in search of economic opportunities. As the younger generation moves to urban centers, the shifts leaves predominantly from the older people in the countryside who, as stated before, have high levels of trust in the national level government. The data shows respondents holding urban house hold registration have less trust in the national level government compared to rural respondents. The data supports Rueschemeyer *et al.* (1992) views on Modernization Theory that urban social density favors the growth of civil society and democracy to balance power with a strong state.

Table 8. Frequency of Respondents Living outside of their Holding Household Registration

	Freq.	Percent
No	3,565	89
Yes	424	11
Total	3,989	100

Source: Texas A&M/Peking University [2008]

Migrants show less trust in national level government. The migrant identification, within the urban demographic, is important and affects trust and will continue to have a big effect in the future. The data supports Zhao Shukai (1999) and Dorothy Solinger (1999) who state that migrant workers are often harassed. It makes sense their levels of trust would be lower. Also, Li's (2004) statement that income in the cities is better than income in the rural agricultural areas explains why this demographic will continue to grow and have a greater and greater impact. Migrant workers tend to be the younger generation moving from rural to urban searching for economic opportunities. Younger rural cards holders continue to seek greater economic opportunities to improve their position in society by moving to the urban centers. The data is in line with the urbanization principles Modernization Theory.

Table 9. Trust Subdivided by Amount of Days Exposed to State-Run TV Media

	<u>Media Exposure</u>			
	0 = none; 1 = 1-6 days; 2 = 7 days			
<u>Trust</u>	0	1	2	Total
(No Trust) 1	4 (29)	3 (36)	3 (31)	3 (96)
2	13 (98)	11 (124)	8 (78)	11 (300)
3	38 (278)	44 (497)	38 (373)	40 (1,148)
(Trust) 4	44 (323)	42 (471)	51 (510)	46 (1,304)
Total	100 (728)	100 (1,128)	100 (992)	100 (2,848)

Pearson chi2 (6) = 31.6983

Pr = 0.000 [p<0.001]

Source: Texas A&M/Peking University [2008]

Table nine shows Chinese trust separated by amount of media exposure. Television media was chosen as the most advanced form of media dispersal with an acceptable sample size. Media exposure is measured by asking the question: “Over the past week, how many days did you receive political information from each of the following sources? Central TV news.” In this case the amount of media exposure is separated into three main categories: no days (none), 1-6 days, and 7 days. Data relates only to 2008 as we have already established a negative relationship between trust over time. Respondents who did not receive political information from Central TV news in the previous week had 83% trust in national level government. Respondents who received political information from Central TV news one to six days in the previous week had 86% trust in the national level government. Respondents who received political information from Central TV news every day of the previous week had 89% trust in the national level government.

Respondents exposed to more national TV media have more trust. The more respondents consume state run media the higher levels of trust with no diminished returns. The high levels of supports Li (2004) who states the citizens hear “beautiful promises” from the central leaders and this expresses itself as higher trust. (pg. 235) However, this data contradicts the findings of Chen and Shi (2001) that prolonged exposure to state controlled media has diminished returns. Also, the data contradicts Wang’s (2006) statement that media exposure has a negative effect on citizen trust in the government. In China, state run media is a tool, and this data suggests the Chinese government uses it well. Policy, like the “Three Represents” (三个代表 - *Sāngè Dàibiǎo*) is yet another tool; this further suggests that the Chinese government uses policy as wisely and effectively as they do other governmental tools like media.

Table 12. Regression

Ordered logistic regression				Number of obs	=	2584
				LR chi2 (19)	=	208.34
				Prob > chi2	=	0.0000
Log likelihood = -2694.963				Pseudo R2	=	0.0372
Trust	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>[z]	[95% Conf. Interval]	
age	.0161712	.003074	5.26	0.000	.101463	.0221961
gender	.0758037	.0785791	0.96	0.335	-.0782085	.2298158
homeowner	-.1457211	.0972948	-1.50	0.134	-.3364153	.0449731
jrhigh	-.1140401	.095359	-1.20	0.232	-.301007	.0729268
highschool	-.0610546	.1149256	-0.53	0.595	-.2863046	.1641953
hhreg*	.3227866	.1100904	2.93	0.003	.1070134	.5385597
newspaper	.0004525	.0281446	0.02	0.987	-.0547098	.0556149
TV_news	.2194332	.0537771	4.08	0.000	.114032	.3248345
cellphone	-.004364	.0860219	-0.05	0.960	-.1729638	.1642358
socialrank	.0582754	.0189101	3.08	0.002	.0212123	.0953385
bluecollar	-.4743123	.1275683	-3.72	0.000	-.7243416	-.224283
whitecollar	-.0642611	.1325384	-0.48	0.628	-.3240316	.1955095
migrant2	-.5272364	.1341705	-3.93	0.000	-.7902058	-.264267
NE	.2003832	.1545156	1.30	0.195	-.1024617	.5032282
North	-.1780469	.1344896	-1.32	0.186	-.4416417	.0855479
East	-.3881931	.1452993	-2.67	0.008	-.6729746	-.1034117
South	-.6846256	.173749	-3.94	0.000	-1.025167	-.3440839
Central	.2576949	.13196	1.95	0.051	-.000942	.5163317
NW	.2351936	.2351936	1.52	0.128	-.0674473	.5378344

Source: Texas A&M/Peking University [2008]

Table twelve shows the ordered logistic regression of control variables and their relationship to regime support. Within the regression we see relationships Modernization Theory fails to explain. Modernization Theory expects those respondents who identify as more educated, urban, and middle class to have the greatest negative relation with regime support. However, we find those who identify as migrant and lower social status (by occupation and self-identification) have the highest negative effect on regime support. The regression tells us why regime support is falling year to year, but it also shows us the sources are not those suggested by Modernization Theory.

Also opposed to modernization theory assumption, urban residency seems to have a negative and significant correlation with regime support for the Chinese Communist Part. Education and middle class identification, both occupational and self-identification, do show a negative correlation with regime support, however the impact is not significant. These correlations tell us urbanites; regardless of education and social status have a negative effect on regime support. We must now question who make up this urban population.

The regression reveals side effects of urbanization may be causing the greatest damage to the Chinese Communist Party's regime support. Lower class migrants in urban centers show the most significant negative effect on regime support. The negative correlation of migrant respondents and regime support suggest those moving to the urban centers are not finding the jobs and money they expected to. These migrants also tend to hold lower class jobs, supported by the negative correlations of both occupational and self-identification. The real danger to the longevity of the Chinese Communist Party is not the growing middle class that Modernization Theory suggest, but rather the growing lower class migrant workers flooding into the cities.

Conclusion

Does the middle class in China display the distinct values, suggested by Modernization Theory as compared to other classes? No. The middle class in China is more closely allied with higher classes of society. While trust remains high among all classes, it is the lower class reporting the least amount of trust in the national level government. This research disproves the main assumptions of Modernization Theory with respect to China. Modernization Theory suggests economic development inexorably leads to democracy through increased urbanization, income, and education creating a growing middle class who

push for democratic reform. This research finds inequality is the greatest cause of a decline in regime support. The inequality we see represented in the data comes from lower classes, usually migrant workers, who move to the city from the countryside for better opportunities which they seem unable to find.

The Chinese Communist Party has done an excellent job of co-opting the middle class. The data suggests the Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents" (三个代表 - *Sāngè Dàibiǎo*) has been a highly effective policy. The "Three Represents" opened the Party to businessmen and entrepreneurs, individuals previously seen as class enemies of the Chinese people. This research supports Lewis and Xue (2003) which suggests the Party under the "Three Represents" cast its lot with the beneficiaries, the emerging business and middle class, of its economic reforms in the belief that only continued rapid development can mitigate the most pressing social problems and ensure stability. Wang (2006) concurs, stating the co-opting of the elite prevents large scale collective action ensuring further stability. This research suggests the Chinese Communist Party saw the potential problems of alienating a growing middle class. Accordingly, they adjusted policy to curtail any potential uprising centered on a powerful and independent middle class.

The research suggests Jiang Zemin's political theory, the "Three Represents" (三个代表 - *Sāngè Dàibiǎo*), has done an excellent job of 'buying' off the middle class. The Party has adapted with the times and has folded the middle class into the Party. Under these conditions the middle class does not act as we would expect to see under Modernization Theory. The research suggests the Chinese Communist Party has an adaptive and responsive nature. This argument is made stronger by the significant positive nature of media exposure on trust. The interesting result of this research is that it highlights the contradiction of the

Chinese Communist Party: apparently valuing middle and upper class over the lower classes when as a Communist Party they should represent if not the lower class, at least everyone equally.

The Chinese Communist Party still holds a high level of over-all support from the Chinese citizens. However, the data in this research shows support has fallen 11% from 2001 to 2008. This research supports Jie Chen (2004), who saw the same pattern of declining support in his Beijing surveys. In the short term, the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party will remain stable. However, the declining support suggests the Party has done a poor job since 2001 at capturing the support of the Chinese people. Based on this trend, one could say Hu Jintao and his policies used up a large portion of the reservoir of goodwill the Chinese people have for the Party. If this downward trend is to be reversed, the new Chinese leadership headed by Xi Jinping should take steps to recapture the support of all Chinese through leadership and policy. To do this the new leader must walk a political path that will maintain the support of the middle and upper class, while at the same time implementing policies that address the issues of the growing migrant lower class in the urban centers. If Xi Jinping can accomplish this the future leadership of the Party will be more stable and predictable.

Appendix A

The China Survey, headquartered at Texas A&M University and guided by an international Board of Overseers, is a major, interdisciplinary, infrastructure project designed to produce biennial, nationwide, social science surveys on a broad range of issues of interest to scholars and policy makers in China and worldwide. The first survey, with a sample size of 3750 chosen randomly in 75 of China's counties, was implemented in the Spring of 2008.

Each survey will include standard social science items representing the various disciplines involved (currently: political science, communication, sociology, and economics), items selected from proposals submitted by interested scholars worldwide, and a battery of items on a special topic, which for the first round will allow researchers to investigate how Chinese citizens learn and communicate about issues and policies. By repeating the survey on a biennial basis, the project will produce data necessary for important studies of *change* in Chinese society.

The China Survey is the centerpiece of the China Archive Survey and Education (CASE) Project of the College of Liberal Arts at Texas A&M University. Planning for the biennial Survey began in Beijing in 2005, at a meeting involving social scientists from several U.S. and Chinese research universities and institutes. The members of the Board of Overseers represent a number preeminent universities and institutes in the United States and in China, and possess vast expertise in survey research in China.

Appendix B

Data Collection Organization: Research Center for Contemporary China. Peking University

Survey Period: 18-03-2001-25-06-2001

As a participating country-team of the World Values Survey (WVS), the Research Center of Contemporary China (RCCC) at Peking University implemented the WVS-China survey in 2001. The target population covers those who are between 18 and 65 of age (born between July 2, 1935 and July 1, 1982), formally registered and actually reside in dwellings within the households in China when the survey is conducted.

Sample:

It is a representative national sample of China containing 40 county/city sample units to collect individual level data of, from a political cultural perspective, the values and attitudes currently held by Chinese citizens. Sample size: 1000

Appendix C

Data Collection Organization: Research Center for Contemporary China.

Survey Period: 25-03-2007-10-05-2007

As a participating country-team of the World Values Survey (WVS), the Research Center of Contemporary China (RCCC) at Peking University implemented the WVS-China survey in 2007. The target population covers those who are between 18 and 70 of age (born between July 2, 1941 and July 1, 1988), formally registered and actually reside in dwellings within the households in China when the survey is conducted.

Sample:

The sample size was determined to be approximately 2,800 eligible individuals are to be drawn out of target population in all provinces of China. 2,873 Target sample size 2,534 Sample drawn in the field 1,991 Completed, valid interviews 78.6% Response rate

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